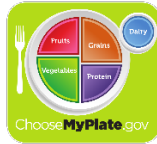


## Back to School

The lazy days of summer are over and it's time to get organized! A routine is the best strategy for a happy home. Making both breakfast and lunch (if you pack lunches) the night before is a life saver!



Remember the MyPlate.gov concept  fruits and veggies cover half your plate!

## Breakfast

Let's move away from the traditional dry cereal (often sweetened) and white toast—although fortified with B vitamins, this classic breakfast does not have the sustaining power that whole grains and protein contain. A breakfast made mostly from refined carbohydrates will lead to a drop in energy midmorning. Make sure your breakfast includes protein, fruits and veggies and whole grains—add a glass of milk for calcium.

Try these ideas:

- Leftover pizza is really not a bad breakfast—dairy, protein, grains
- Overnight oats: place oats, fruit, nuts and milk in a bowl, set it in the fridge overnight and enjoy them in the morning—and they are not slimy like cooked oats!
- Nothing wrong with a P B & J sandwich on whole grain bread—put fruit slices in the middle for some extra nutrition
- Make scrambled egg “muffins” (whisk eggs and pour into greased muffin tins over cooked veggies and shredded cheese. Bake, then freeze—microwave for a quick breakfast)
- Make a large batch of wholegrain pancakes or waffles on the weekend—freeze on a cookie sheet and then store in the freezer—microwave and enjoy topped with nut butter and fruit or yogurt
- Grilled cheese with sliced apples or pears
- Put smoothie ingredients into your blender cup/pitcher and store in the fridge overnight—blend and go in the morning
- Smoothie bowls are a combo of overnight oats and unblended smoothies—cottage cheese, yogurt, fruit, nuts, grains—use your imagination!

All of these can be made in advance so your morning routine can flow like a well-oiled machine—easy, quick and nutritious!

Don't forget the veggies!

- Add leftover veggies to the make ahead egg “muffins”
- Try peanut butter and carrot sticks as a grab and go
- Sliced tomatoes go well with boiled eggs, either as a sandwich filling or on a plate
- Poach eggs in salsa—add some spinach!
- Add grated carrots to oatmeal, cook then season with classic pumpkin pie spice for a real treat in the morning!

## Lunch

I am a fan of school lunch—easy, cheap and thanks to the USDA very nutritious, but if you do pack your children's or your own lunch keep these things in mind:

- Keep cold things cold and hot things hot (most schools/offices have microwaves so really, just keep things cold)
- Make everything the night before, some people even make several sandwiches and freeze them—using the frozen food to keep things cool in the lunchbox
- Try to include at least 3 food groups—this does NOT mean a sandwich, chips, and cookie!
- Leftovers are great for lunch—just put them in small containers as you clear the evening meal and you are ready for the next day
  - Toss leftover vegetables in salad dressing. Add to lettuce to make a salad or use as a sandwich filling
  - Pour a little orange juice on cut up fruit for a tasty dessert

### Get creative with sandwiches

- **Variations on Peanut Butter**
  - Mix 2 parts peanut butter and one part non-fat dry milk powder. Add honey or mashed bananas to taste. Serve with whole grain crackers or apple wedges.
  - Mix peanut butter and applesauce with a dash of cinnamon.
  - Add sesame, pumpkin or sunflower seeds to peanut butter.
  - Add dried fruit to peanut butter.
  - Spread quick breads such as banana bread, nut breads, or applesauce bread with peanut butter.
  - Add cheese slices to a peanut butter sandwich.
- **Cheese Plus**
  - Grate or chop a mild cheese (low fat), add a little salad dressing and one or more of the following for a unique sandwich filling:
    - Pickle relish
    - Chopped nuts
    - Minced onion
    - Chopped green pepper, cucumbers, celery, zucchini, tomato
    - Chopped leftover grilled veggies
  - Mix cottage cheese or low-fat cream cheese with one or more of the following to make a sandwich spread, vegetable dip, or pocket bread filler:
    - Minced green onions
    - Chopped tomatoes

- Cucumbers
- Bacon bits
- Chopped green peppers

Don't forget some "sides":

- Whole grain crackers
- Cheese cubes
- Fruit
- Unconventional salad—chopped cabbage, fruit, nuts, light dressing sweetened with honey and fruit juice—use your imagination!
- Homemade granola bars